Marshmallow Heart

Every day
is another near death experience.

Once I haunted
the sidewalks
of New Orleans—
four in the morning
making my tipsy way home
from the bars—
hoping someone would shoot me
in the gut—
off me
so I wouldn't have to struggle with
offing myself.

Ten years later
it's riot cops
in Miami
with batons on the side of my skull
and bike wrecks
with potholes
where tender parts of me
slam onto the pavement.

My head's not going
to take much more of this shit—
and what will become
of my marshmallow heart?

August 2004

A Few Words

$1 or funky cool trade

Poetry by Chantel G.



Photo by Tony Young

Chantel says:

I am a sex-positive bisexual anarchist who has been a feminist for as long as I can remember. I am a poet, a writer, a book maker, and a photographer who writes letters to prisoners, laughs at puns and cares passionately about women's health and sexuality.

Thanks to Laurie for years of support; Cassidy for unfailing love, encouragement, and positive thought; Butch for saying that I should put my poetry in a book, Vanessa and Wesley for being anarchist poet role models; Kalila for being a true friend who gives comforting hugs; and my funkadelic comradeTony for showing me the importance of sleep, back rubs, dance parties,and eating well. This little collection wouldn't be in your hands without these good folks.

Fig

For Grant

Never eaten a fig,
Kansas boy?

What do you do for pleasure
here in the heavy summer heat
if you can't pluck
a juicy soft purple bruise
from amidst
the fuzzy green leaves—
pop it directly into your yearning
mouth—
sink hard teeth
into an explosion
of ambrosia—
eyes rolled back in your head
in sheer delight?

What do hedonists do
in Kansas
during the long dry days
of summer?

August 15, 2002

Twister

I dreamed of tornadoes last night.

I looked out into the distance
and off on the horizon
I watched them form out of nothing at all.
One moment they weren't there,
but in a beat of my heart they were
swirling
swirling
swirling.

They appeared white and puffy
—frothy and savage—
like storm clouds deranged and gone wild.

I've never seen a tornado
in my wide awake life,
but last night they haunted my sleep.

Coming toward me—
No place to hide—
No way to make an escape.

I felt fear and excitement—
elation and terror—
my whole life
narrowed down
to hot wind and dry dust.

July 10, 2003

Bastrop State Park
The Lost Pines

We drove out late in the summer night
and hiked in the illuminated darkness
to camp under
the three days from full moon
surrounded by the halo of the cloudy sky
amid pine trees rare in central Texas.

We found a clearing among the trees
and didn't bother with a tent
but put down a crinkly blue plastic tarp
and spread out our sleeping bags
side by side by side by side.

I awoke
into the steel grey sky of the overcast morning
and thought the sound of the wind
through the tall pine trees
was the sound of rain,
but I wasn't wet,
so I closed my eyes a little longer.

June 14, 2000

The Liquid Bean

A boy
tries to persuade me
to buy
his book of poetry.

Another boy
talks endlessly
about what art is
(and what it's not).

A third boy
begs Tracy
(silently)
"Pay attention to me."

We sit outside
on the bench seat
of a long demolished automobile
and watch the Atlanta traffic
go on by.

June 9, 1993

Rain

Lightest raindrops fall
like lover's kisses on my skin.
Each one tiny
yet electrifying.
My nerves awaken—
Cry out for you.

Lightest raindrops fall
like coldest tears
because we are apart.

June 20, 2003

Two Poems Inspired by Sister Spit

I can't believe I acted like a puppy dog over you
Followed you around to see
the wrinkles by your eyes
when you laughed—
Hoping for a kiss.
You didn't even throw me a milkbone.
Am I such a bad dog?
Next time I meet a woman who turns me on
I'll act like a cat instead.

July 11, 1997

Woke up
Thinking of you
With the cord of my vibrator wrapped around my neck.
Can't find an ink pen at two in the morning.
Need to write this down before I burst.
Where's the fucking ink pen?
Where do the ink pens go at two in the morning?
Emotional rawness
getting rawer because I can't write it down.
Ready to open a vein and use my own blood—
The need is so desperate.
Two in the morning—
the vibrator cord a noose around my neck
like your ignorance of me is a noose around my soul.
Under the bed—a pen.
I write (and write and write and write).
Sweet release—
more satisfying
than what the vibrator did for me.

July 11, 1997

Goddess Me

"I am the Queen!" I exclaimed with delight
after hours of loving and pleasure.
"The Queen?" he frowned,
thinking the Queen wasn't enough for all that I am.
"You are the Priestess," he declared.
"No, no," I sighed
as I remembered
all that I was
and all that I am
and all that I will be.
"I am the Goddess. I am the Goddess herself."

August 6, 2000

Ghosts

Haunted
by jasmine
that blooms in the night.

Haunted
by eyes
of the sweetest blue.

Haunted
by thunder
far in the distance.

Haunted
by heart wrenching
memories of you.

May 2003

Going Away

To Jessica and Jamie

The first humid days of Austin summer-
the solstice four weeks away
but days already sweltering and suppressingly hot.
We parked your new used truck
in the lot of the Fiesta supermarket.
The three of us perched on the hood
of the silver grey truck,
our butts baking
from the heat still radiating from the engine-
even more heat rose up
from the melting black asphalt beneath us.
We could hear the songs of Peruvian mountain music
being played by a live band
near the store's busy entrance-
the ethereal notes of the wooden flute
drifted into our ready ears.
We devoured a pint of ice cream-
arctic down our throats-
a delectable blend of tart cherries and chunky chocolate-
we took turns licking the thick cold sweetness
from our one giant metal spoon.
I thought about how much I'd miss
the both of you-
how lonesome I would be
when you were gone.

May 29, 2000

Fork Muffin

The sky was a Magritte painting
when I stepped into
the cool spring air—
bright blue atmospheric canvas
filled with puffy tufts of white cloud
lined with grey—
don't expect everything to be ok.

I wondered if
businessmen in old time dress
would float down
from Heaven—
Thankfully,
they stayed away.

My whole life
is surreality.

Could you help me
move the giant comb
from the corner
of my bedroom?

March 30, 2003

War Torn

We all knew there would be an invasion
long before March 19th rolled around.
The urban cowboy in the White House
had been talking it up for months.
Dude must think he is John Wayne.

But at the time war was announced,
I felt nothing other than shock.
All I could do was
tightly grip my best friend's hand
and swallow my flood of tears.
I might have exploded—
I could be a human bomb
of righteous anger—
but my rage
won't bring about
more love.

In these times
no span of attention
stepping out in front of cars—
too little sleep
and not enough protest.

I've lost two sets of keys
in as many months—
too distracted to remember
where I've set them down
or notice when they fall
from my pocket.
Can barely keep up a conversation
before my train of thought
derails.

Too caught up contemplating
death in the desert.
Not just soldiers
Mammas and babies—
Daddies and kids—
killed by bombs and guns,
thirst and starvation.
Who will witness
blood and gristle—
hearts and lungs?
We'd rather not
have to see.
How can anyone call this massacre
liberation?

War is not
a sporting event.
We can't cheer the home team
to victory
and go about our lives
pretending that killing each other
doesn't make a difference—
Murder changes everything.

People are dying.
People are dead.
How dare we believe
that life can ever be the same?

May 2003

At Chestnut Charlie's

Three hours of physical labor
after four years at a desk
is enough
to wear a woman down.

Weary thigh muscles
and a slow ache
in the lower back—
Just plain tired all over
with sluggish brain
that can't complete
a sentence.
I've been here before...

Even in the fall,
three o'clock in the afternoon
is a hot time
to get started,
but the temperature drops
until it's time to go home.
It's cooler in the morning—
shoes soon soaked with dew—
but the heat climbs
with the sun in the sky—
brightness soon beating down
on wide straw hat
meant to protect
brain and eyes.

Chestnut picking
is actually gathering—
nuts not plucked from branches of trees,
but retrieved from the ground
where they fall—
shiny rich deep brown
with a spot the shade of peanut butter
laying half hidden amidst
green end-of-summer grass
and three leaf clover.

Walk tree to tree to tree
row to row
A to Z
40 or so in a line.
Stoop and scoop
bend and stretch—
don't need aerobics or yoga
after a day of this—
Toiling in the fresh air
is workout enough.

October 31, 2004

Deluge

Thunderstorm struck early last night—
Flashes of lightening
and crashes of thunder
against the cloud darkened sky.

Water released from the
somber grey heavens
to be gulped
by the parched Kansas earth.
The ground really needed that rain.

I hope that the moisture
quenches the garden—
The plants have been thirsty for quite a few days.
The hose is never really enough.

July 10, 2003

Berries

Mulberry pickin' in the warm afternoon drizzle—
I drop the juicy little fruits
into a shiny green travel mug
left behind by a stranger.
I'm not too proud
to take
what others
have cast away.
I like what's free,
a cup forgotten in the library auditorium
and food that grows on public trees,
paid for with only
purple stains on my fingers
and maybe an itchy chigger bite
or two.

November 16, 2004

Slow Spring

I stand between two gas stations
near the busy intersection of
9th and Iowa,
impatiently anticipating the slowly circling
city bus--
I have a while to wait
until 5 dimes
buy my trip
over two hills and
into the flatness of Downtown.

The digital clock on the bank across the way
blinks 68 degrees,
but the air feels colder to me.
Three years in this town
and I'm not yet accustomed to
the harsh Kansas wind
whipping at my clothes
and chilling exposed skin.

The last three days were
overcast and grey--
no sun or blue above.
I thought Spring would be
brilliant and bright,
but bare tree branches
and dreary winter sky
are all I see again today.

2004

Remember

Spring comes late here.
It's the beginning of May,
and I'm still wearing long pants and a jacket.
I haven't gone barefoot once this year.
In New Orleans,
folks are living the second weekend of Jazz Fest.
The days there are hot and humid,
exhausting, I know
even though I haven't been there in years.
Some things I will never forget-
the stench of the French Quarter in the golden morning light-
the rhythm of the Mississippi gently lapping at the rocks-
the hot pepper bite of a crawfish boil potato-
loving you with a hangover on Mardi Gras morning-
and losing you before the end of Lent.

May 22, 2002

Shift

It's the strangest thing.

I feel depressed,
but instead of hating myself,
I have a deep and pervasive
loathing
for everyone else.

I can't decide
if this is
improvement
or
regression.

July 3, 2004

Surprise

The sunshine of the daytime
became cold rain at night.
I was ill prepared—
no raincoat or umbrella—
riding on my bike.
I never guessed
that darkness
would bring along the rain.
It had been
a perfect day
of warm Spring sun
two weeks before
the Solstice came.

The chill of night
surrounded me
and damp wind brushed my face
as I pedaled home on tires brand new,
swift and smooth through fog.
My bright blue hoody jacket
kept frigid water off my neck
but hands were cold
on handlebars—
gloves left behind
at home.

2004

Anarchist Valentine

As of today,
our romance
consists of
Nine months of letter exchange—
mushy missives filled with
lust and hope;
Six hilarious "dates"
in a drab and barren
prison visiting room—
holding hands
across a too short table
which held our feasts of junk food
during vending machine picnics,
the two of us
the only fools laughing;
Seven real honey kisses
shared under the stony gaze
of unamused prison guard
chaperones—
How long can lips touch
and tongues intertwine
before we've gone too far?
Junior high transgressions
never meant
being sent
to the hole.

Our love is much more
CrimthINC.
than Hallmark card
or Hollywood movie—
Our love is
a dandelion
that pushed up from the crack
in the urban pavement,
a complete and delicious
surprise.

February 4, 2004

Bliss

I want to write a poem
so you will understand
how I adored the cantaloupe
the humid hot night you handed me
a thick slice
shiveringly chilled in the ice box
and fragrant as deep summer in the first garden.

But how do I describe
the sweet wet
melon of a taste
that my thirsty tongue wrapped around
in delight
after my teeth ripped
the juicy flesh
from the rind?

What words will explain
the joy in my soul
when the delicious sticky nectar
ran in rushing rivers down my chin
and I wiped my childhood face
with the back of my sunburnt hand?

May 15, 2000

Nectar

In the middle days of August
the artist brought us
watermelon-
garden ripe
and still chilly from refrigerator.

I cut it in the bathroom sink-
sharp steel blade
through crisply crunchy rind
and surprising yellow flesh.

The melon's heart tasted of
just mown grass
and rain-
sweet and cold
against our tongues-
brief relief
at summer's end.

We stood in the driveway gravel
and devoured the fruit.
With each delicious bite,
luscious sticky juice dripped
from my mouth
down my chin
off my hands
over my arms.
Hard to believe
something so wet
could grow in a drought.

We spit the abundant ebony seeds
into the dusty dry rocks
and hoped plants would take root,
grow magical
like Jack's beanstalk.

August 2003

Morning

Sunrise sunshine
lights up the kitchen
like the second coming
of Jesus Christ-
So bright and golden
it lights up
all of
the efficiency home-
Wakes me
and makes me
think
it must be time
to roll out of bed-
only to find
it's earlier
than I thought.
Don't need a shrill
alarming clock
to jolt me from sleep-
the sun does the job
(not so harsh)
when it pushes through
the fat, colorful flowers on the
thin fabric
tacked up
over the East side window.

April 14, 2004

Night

Parched midnight awakening—
Orange juice need.
Padding through the dark house
on cold naked feet.
Reaching into the no light bulb
refrigerator cavern.
Shattering smash—
jar on concrete floor.
Moonbeam through window—
Gleaming white curls
among chunks and shards
of glass like ice.
Coconut—
Pure decadence—
wasted on the dirty floor.

July 4th

What I remember vividly
about the time
before the protest
at the military base
is standing in
the breathtaking heat
of the food-strewn kitchen
waiting for
our time to leave.

You made poetry
with dumpstered honeydew—
scooped slimy seeds
from the hollow in the middle—
peeled thin rind
from pale green flesh—
mingled it with cantaloupe
for a medley of melon.

On that day,
Nothing could quench my thirst.

October 15, 2003

Revelation

From the frigid February night
we walked into the art gallery heat
and my glasses fogged
until I couldn't see.

When my vision cleared,
I found we were both
dancing to the notes
of the jazz trio—
so much dancing together.

As my body moved
to the song
I felt the packets
of dumpstered gummie bears
shift in my pockets—
candy petrified by cold and age.

The hipsters barely
bobbed their heads—
so cool were they
who wore identical glazed
expressions of boredom.
They didn't even show
horror at my unfashionable
and filthy paint-stained
cargo pants
or the hood
of your jacket
actually on your head.

It was a perfect moment
of clarity and joy
as I remembered
that having fun
is infinitely more important
than looking cool.

February 7, 2004

Winter 2004

Cold cold cold today.

Temperature dropped
while I was sleeping—
tucked into my warm bed—
a blanket
two quilts
and three comforters
piled on top of me.

Valerian induced deep sleep
made talk nearly impossible
when my bedmate returned home
from late night soccer
and slipped in next to me.

Woke this morning
forgetting I was depressed,
which is a good way to wake
until the sadness comes crashing down
like bricks on a kitten—
like the bricks I think I'll cough up
when I'm sobbing
and just can't stop.

January 2004

New Year 2004 2:30 am

Cold air stings my face
as I ride in the darkness
on a bike not my own.

The Red & Black Clunker has its charm—
basket on the front—
wide black seat—
upright posture of the handlebars.

Stuck in 5th gear
I pedal standing up—
push with thigh muscles
to struggle over historic brick,
but when the path is even and flat,
I glide free and fast,
gleefully through the night.

I watch for drunks in metal cars—
look both ways
on even one way streets.
No helmet—
No lights—
No brakes—
I am vulnerable
but luckily get myself home
to begin another year.

January 3, 2004

Longing for Home

What do I miss about the place that I love?

The sweet smell of spring in New Orleans—
 Magnolia blossoms and jasmine blooming in the night.
Talking to my mamma seven times a week.
The high, high ceilings on Rampart Street.
Energy in the air that I thought I could
 reach out and grab.
The shock of the heat after spending time in A/C.
Biking over the flatlands of the city.
People sitting out on their stoops—
 Saying "good evening" to passers by.
Crashing thunderstorms on sweltering summer afternoons.
Music Music everywhere—
 A primal pulse underlying everything.
Seeing folks I knew every single where I went.
Feeling as if I were a vital part of the city.
Feeling as if I were home.

April 20, 2000

Sprinkle of Rain

I wasn't aware
until I stepped outside
of the persistant drizzle--
just enough to annoy
with a slow soak--
wet cold down my collar
and damp shoes.

I want the sun.

November 16, 2004

Revolutionary Propaganda Poem #1

Kansas!
What have you given me, Kansas?

Solidarity Forever
and the outline of this sunflower state
always on my arm.

Ah Kansas-
Red and Black
and a community of friends
to call home.
Speaking out and
stopping traffic-
cheap rent
and people I can trust.

Kansas-
a land of four seasons:
Icicles and angels in the snow
(Who would have thought
a Southern girl
could adore the frigid winter?)-
The relief of tulips in the spring
and leaves fresh green after heavy rain-
The intensity of summer heat
that doesn't last half a year
and sunflowers growing on corners of streets-
Leaves of fire in autumn
The most amazing sight I've known.

Kansas-
This state in the Bible Belt-
a place of sodomy laws and creationism-
Backwards thought in shut tight minds.
"This is a Republican state,"
I'm told.

But change-
it is a comin'.

There's an oasis here in Kansas-
A life of mutual aid,
cooperation,
equality,
and freedom.
Change-
We are creatin' it
in this place that I love.

May 17, 2003

Stars

This poem is the first about winter.
Coming from the South by way of Texas,
they tend towards "deep summer" and "sweltering heat."
But last night the coldly crisp November air of Eastern Kansas
felt more like winter than autumn—
in no way like summer.

Long underwear under my long cargo pants—
thermal shirt and fuzzy sweater under my hoody.
We all forgot our gloves.

We forced ourselves
—and urged each other—
from the warmth of bed
at four in the still dark morning
to drive to the outskirts of the city.
The three of us sat close together
on a sleeping bag spread out on a dead end country road—
all so we could gaze at the icy silver stars
silently zipping through the blue black sky
illuminated by the not quite full moon.

Our bodies shivered in the cold—
a good excuse to huddle tight in friendship
and cuddle in comradery.
Time and again, we interrupted our own sentences
to gasp and moan aloud
at the bright lovely shooting of each meteor in the shower,
at every tail briefly left behind.

November 19, 2002

Lawrence Personality #1

Early this morning
as I unchained my bike
from the rack
in front of the silent Granada,
I noticed Clyde across the street.

His curly dark hair was unruly,
and he wore an orange Hawaiian lei
(made of cloth, not plastic)
around his neck.
He was laughing
and (hopefully) happy.

Sometimes he seems distressed,
wanders around Downtown
flailing his arms
and talking excitedly
to people I can't see—
his reality is as true to him
as mine is to me.

Today Clyde sat on the Mass. Street curb
arms at his sides
while his chuckles bounced
off unmoving cars
until the door of Aimee's opened
and he moved inside for coffee.

I wonder what he dreams about.

November 1, 2004

Memory

As I walk myself to work,
I swear I can feel
the soft skin of your neck
hot upon my lips
from when I kissed you
on my way out the door.

Phantom sensation
of nerve endings meeting—
skin upon skin—
me against you.

I know what we have
is not based on
love sonnets
or notions romantic and wild—
You are my comrade, after all.
But I'd like to capture in poetry
the way that the feel of you
lingers in my body memory
even after we part.

Fall 2003

Sestina

The night sky is brilliant
with moonlight and stars-the air luxurious
and thick with heat. I watch in awe
as you devour my heart
with your soul's hunger,
much to my joy.

I sigh with joy
at the words you speak brilliant.
I hunger
for your thick, soft, dark hair luxurious
in my hand. My heart
trembles with passion in awe

to be close to you. I am in awe
of the intensity of the joy
I feel to be near you. In your hand is my heart
slickly gleaming and wetly brilliant
in the moonlight luxurious,
pulsing with my hunger.

We are connected by a hunger.
We are locked together in awe
of the electricity between us luxurious.
The night air is alive with my joy.
The light from your eyes is brilliant,
like a star-like my heart.

At the heart
of me, for you a hunger.
The sharpness of my pain is brilliant.
I am bewildered by, yet in awe
of, the joy
in my soul when I feel your touch luxurious.

Your love for me could be luxurious

within my heart.
Your love for me would fill me with joy
and satiate my hunger.
Although you do not share your love, I am in awe
of my love for you intense and brilliant.

I need your luxurious love in the night brilliant.
The thought of the joy we could share brings me shivers of awe.
Your lack of love for me leaves my heart writhing with hunger.

October 2, 1999